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THE
H I S T O R Y
On which is founded the
T R A G E D Y
O F
Tancred and Sigismunda.

*Taught hence, ye Parents who from nature stray,
And the great Ties of Social Life betray;
Ne'er with your Children act a Tyrant's Part;
'Tis your's to GUIDE, not VIOLATE the Heart,*



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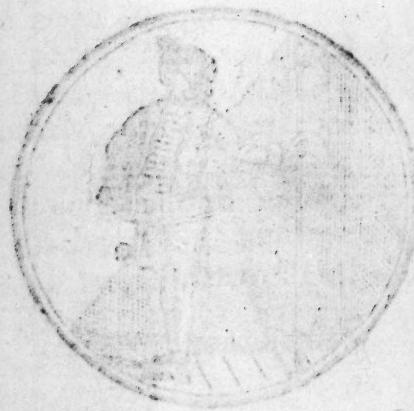
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МОНОГРАММА

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T H E
H I S T O R Y
On which is founded the TRAGEDY of
Tancred and Sigismunda

Roger king of Sicily had a brother and a sister ; the first called Mainfroy, revolted against him, and lighted up a dangerous and bloody war in the kingdom ; but had the misfortune to lose two battles, and fall into the hands of the king, who contented himself with punishing his rebellion, by depriving him of his liberty. This clemency served only to make Roger pass for a barbarian, in the opinion of a part of his subjects, who said he had only saved his brother's life, in order to exercise upon him a slow and inhuman revenge. But all the rest, with more foundation, imputed the harsh treatment that Mainfroy suffered in prison, to his sister Mathilda alone : for she had, in effect, always hated the prince, and did not cease persecuting him as long as he lived : but she died soon after him, and her death was looked upon as a just punishment for her unnatural disposition.

Mainfroy having left two sons, as yet in their infancy, Roger wished to get rid of them, fearing that when they should arrive at a more advanced age, the desire of revenging their father would induce them to revive a faction which was not so much quelled, but that it might occasion new troubles in the state. He imparted his design to the senator Leontio Siffredi,

his minister, who to divert him from putting it in execution, undertook the Education of Tancred, the eldest, and advised him to commit the youngest, who was called Don Pedro, to the care of the constable of Sicily. Roger, persuaded that his nephews would be brought up by these men in that submission and duty which they owed to him, left the princes to their conduct, and charged himself with the care of his niece Constantia, who was of the same age with Tancred, and only daughter of the princess Mathilda; he furnished her with women and masters, and spared nothing in her education.

Leontio Siffredi had a castle two short leagues from Palermo, at a place called Belmont; and there that minister employed himself in rendering Tancred worthy of mounting one day, the throne of Sicily. He soon observed in that prince, such amiable qualities, that he applied himself in the cultivation of them, as closely, as if he had had no children of his own. He was blessed, however, with two daughters; the eldest called Sigismunda, younger by a year than the prince, was adorned with the most perfect beauty: the other named Porcia, whose birth occasioned her mother's death, was still in the cradle. Sigismunda and prince Tancred, as soon as they were capable of love, entertained a mutual passion; though they had not the liberty of conversing in private. The prince, however, did not fail to find opportunities sometimes; and knew so well how to profit by these precious moments, that he engaged the daughter of Siffredi to allow him to execute a project he had formed. Just about this time, it happened that Leontio was obliged by the king's orders, to make a journey into one of the most remote provinces of the island: and during his absence, Tancred caused an opening to be made in the wall of his apartment, that was contiguous to the chamber of Sigismunda; supplying it with a sliding

ing partition of wood, that opened and shut, without being perceived; because it was so closely joined to the ceiling, that the eye could not discover the artifice. A skilful architect, whom the prince had made his friend, performed the work with equal diligence and secrecy.

Through this passage, the amorous Tancred introduced himself sometimes into the chamber of his mistress; but he did not abuse her favour: for, tho' she was imprudent enough to allow him a private entrance into her apartment, she did not condescend so far, until he had assured her, that he would never ask any thing that innocence could not grant. One night, he found her very uneasy, because she had heard that Roger was very ill, and had sent for Siffredi, as high chancellor of the kingdom, in order to entrust him with his last will. She represented to herself already, her dear Tancred on the throne, and being afraid of losing him in that high station, was under the utmost anxiety; and the tears stood in her eyes when he appeared. "Heavens! you weep, madam: what must I think of that sorrow with which I see you overwhelmed?" Sir, (replied Sigismunda) I cannot conceal my alarms: the king, your uncle will soon cease to live, and you will succeed him. When I therefore foresee how far your new greatness will remove you from me, I own, I cannot be unconcerned. A monarch seldom beholds things with a lover's eye, and that which was his utmost ambition while he was a subject, affects him but slightly, when he is on the throne. Whether it be an unhappy presage, or reason only that inspires me, I feel my soul agitated with emotions that all my confidence in your goodness cannot asswage; and though I dare not doubt your generosity, I cannot help distrusting my own happiness. "Adorable Sigismunda (replied the prince) your fears are obliging, and justify my

attachment to your charms : but the excess of your doubts, injures my love, and (if I may be allowed to say so) the esteem which you owe me. No ! think not that my destiny and yours can ever be separated. Believe rather, that you will always be the object of my happiness and joy. Lay aside your fear, therefore, and let it not disturb such endearing moments." Ah, Sir (answered the daughter of Leontio) as soon as you are crowned, your subjects, perhaps, will demand for your queen, a princess descended from a long race of kings, whose splendid nuptials may add new realms to yours ; and perhaps, alas ! you will answer their expectation, even at the expence of your inclination. " Hah ! why (replied Tancred, with some warmth) why are you thus prone to torment yourself, by raising such an afflicting image of what will never happen ? Should heaven dispose of the king, my uncle, and make me master of Sicily, I swear that I will espouse you in Palermo, in presence of all my court, and I invoke all that is sacred, to confirm my oath.

Siffredi's daughter was cheared by the protestations of Tancred, and the rest of their conversation turned on the king's distemper : on which occasion, Tancred discovered the goodness of his heart, in lamenting his uncle's fate, with which he had no great reason to be affected : the force of blood, making him regret a prince, by whose death he would acquire a crown. Sigismunda, as yet, did not know all the misfortunes that threatned her. The constable of Sicily had met with her coming out of her father's apartment, one day when he was at the castle of Belmont, on some important affairs ; was captivated with her beauty, and next day, demanded her in marriage of Siffredi, who consented to the match ; but Roger's distemper intervening, the nuptials were deferred, and Sigismunda knew nothing of the matter.

One

One morning, just as Tancred had done dressing, he was surprised to see Leontio, followed by Sigismunda, come into his apartment. "Sir (said that minister to him) the news I bring are afflicting, but the consolation with which they are attended ought to moderate your grief. The king, your uncle is dead, after having left you heir to his sceptre, and Sicily is subject to your sway. The grandees of the realm, who attend your orders at Palermo, have commissioned me to receive them from your mouth, and I am come, Sir, with my daughter, as the first of your new subjects, to offer our early and sincere homage. The prince, who knew very well that Roger had laboured two months, under a disease that gradually consumed him, was not much surprised at this piece of news; nevertheless, struck with the sudden change of his condition, he felt a thousand confused emotions rise within his breast; and having mused some time, he broke silence, by addressing himself to Leontio, in these words; "Sage Siffredi, I will always look upon you as my father, glory in regulating my conduct by your counsel, and you shall be as much king in Sicily as I am. So saying, he advanced to a table, on which there was a standish, and taking a sheet of paper, wrote his name at the bottom of the page. "What are you about to do, Sir (said Siffredi to him.)" "I am going to manifest my gratitude and esteem, answered Tancred, presenting the sheet to Sigismunda, and saying, receive, madam, this pledge of my faith, and of the empire over my inclinations which I now yield to you." Sigismunda took it, blushing, and made this answer to the prince; "I receive with respect the favours of my king; but I depend upon a father; and I hope your Majesty will not take it ill, that I deposite this paper in his hands, to be used as his prudence shall direct him."

She

She accordingly gave the subscription of Tancred to her father, who then observed what till that moment had escaped his penetration. He discerned the prince's sentiments, and said to him, " Your Majesty shall have no cause to reproach me ; for I will not abuse the confidence---" My dear Leontio ! (cried Tancred, interrupting him) I don't imagine you can abuse it. Whatever use you shall make of the paper, I will approve of your determination. But go (added he) return to Palermo ; order the preparations to be made for my coronation, and tell my subjects, that I will follow you immediately thither, in order to receive their oaths of allegiance, and assure them of my affection. The minister obeyed his new master's orders, and with his daughter set out for Palermo.

A few hours after their departure, the prince took the same road, more engrossed by his love, than by the high rank to which he was raised. As soon as he arrived in the city, he was saluted with innumerable shouts of joy, and amidst the acclamations of his people, entered the palace, where every thing was already prepared for the ceremony, and where he found the princess Constantia in deep mourning, and to all appearance, very much affected with Roger's death. As they owed one another a mutual compliment of condolance on that event, they both acquitted themselves very handsomely ; but it was more cold on the side of Tancred, than on that of Constance, who, in spite of the enmity subsisting between their families, could not hate the prince. He placed himself on the throne, and the princess sat on his right hand in an elbow chair not quite so high. The grandees of the kingdom took their places, each according to his rank : the ceremony began, and Leontio, as high chancellor of state, and keeper of the late king's will, opened and read it with an audible voice. This deed contained in substance, that Roger, seeing himself

self without issue, named the eldest son of Mainfroy for his successor, on condition, that he should espouse the princess Constance; which if he refused to perform, he should forfeit the crown of Sicily to the infant Don Pedro, his brother, who should enjoy it on the same terms.

Tancred was confounded at these words! the restriction gave him incredible pain, which became still more violent, when Leontio, after having read the will, pronounced to the whole assembly, “ My lords, having reported the last intentions of the late king, to our new monarch, that generous prince consents to honour his cousin, the princess Constance, with his hand.” At these words, Tancred interrupted the chancellor, saying, “ Leontio, remember the writing which Sigismunda----” Sir, (said Sifredi with precipitation, before the prince had time to explain himself) here it is. The grandees of the realm (added he, shewing the paper to the assembly) will here see by your majesty’s august signature, the esteem you have for the princess, and the deference you pay to the last will of the deceased king, your uncle. Having spoke these words, he read the deed with which he himself had filled the paper, containing the most solemn engagement to marry Constance, conformable to the intention of Roger. The hall rung with repeated shouts of all present, who cried, “ Long live our magnanimous king Tancred :” for, as no body was ignorant of the aversion which that prince had always manifested for the princess, it was feared, not without reason, that he would revolt against the condition of the will, and, by these means, raise commotions in the kingdom. But the reading of this paper entirely composed the minds of the nobles and people, and excited these general acclamations, which in secret, tortured the monarch’s soul.

B

Constance

Constance, who, both on account of her own glory, and her passion for Tancred, enjoyed the public satisfaction more than any body, chose this time to assure him of her gratitude. But the prince, in vain, endeavouring to constrain himself, received her compliment with great affliction, and was, indeed, in such disorder, that he could not perform what decency required. At last, yielding to the violence of his passion, he approached Siffredi, whom the duty of his office obliged to be pretty near his person, and with a low voice, said, "What have you done Leontio? the subscription, which I put into your daughter's hands, was not intended for this use. You have betrayed"-----"Sir (said Siffredi, interrupting him, in a resolute tone) consider your own glory; if you refuse to follow the will of the king, your uncle, you lose the crown of Sicily." He had no sooner spoke in this manner, than he removed at a greater distance from the king, that he might not have an opportunity to reply. Tancred remained in the utmost perplexity, and felt himself agitated by contrary emotions. He was incensed against Siffredi, he could not resolve to abandon Sigismunda; but, distracted between her and the interest of his glory, it was some time before he could come to any resolution. However, he was determined at last, and thought he had fallen upon a method to preserve the daughter of Siffredi, without renouncing the throne. He feigned submission to the will of Roger, and purposed, while a dispensation for his marriage with his cousin, should be soliciting at Rome, to gain the nobles of the realm by his bounty, and establish his dower so well, that he should not be obliged to fulfil its conditions.

As soon as he had formed this design, he became more tranquil, and turning to Constance, confirmed to her what the high chancellor had read before the whole assembly. But in the very moment, when he betrayed

betrayed himself so far as to plight his troth to her, Sigismunda arrived in the council-hall. She came thither by her father's command, to pay her respects to the princess, and her ears were struck with the words of Tancred, at her first entrance. Besides, Leontio, being desirous that she should have no cause to doubt of her misfortune, said, while he presented her to Constance, " Daughter do homage to your queen, and wish her all the sweets of a flourishing reign and happy marriage." This terrible stroke overwhelmed the unfortunate Sigismunda ! in vain she endeavoured to conceal her grief ; she blushed and grew pale alternately, and shook through every limb. Nevertheless, the princess had not the least suspicion of the cause, but attributed the disorder in which she paid her compliment, to the perplexity of a young creature bred up in solitude, and altogether unaccustomed to the court. It was quite otherwise with the young king : the sight of Sigismunda abashed him ; and the despair he observed in her eyes, transported him quite beside himself. He did not doubt that, judging by appearances, she believed him unfaithful. He would have been less uneasy, could he have spoke to her : but how could he find an opportunity, when all Sicily, as one may say, had its eyes upon him. Besides, the cruel Siffredi deprived him of that hope : for reading the thoughts of these two lovers, in their looks, and willing to prevent the mischief which the violence of their passion might create in the state, that minister, in an artful manner, carried his daughter out of the assembly, and set out with her, on his return to Belmont ; resolved, for more reasons than one, to have her married as soon as possible.

They were no sooner arrived, than he made her acquainted with all the horror of her fate, by declaring that he had promised her in marriage to the constable. " Just heaven ! (cried she, in a transport of

grief, which her father's presence could not repress,) for what direful punishment is the unfortunate Sigismunda reserved!" Her despair was even so violent, as to suspend all the faculties of her soul. She was seized with an universal chilness, and becoming clay-cold and wan, swooned away in the arms of her father. He was affected with her condition; but, though he shared her affliction with all the tenderness of a parent, his first resolution still remained unshaken. Sigismunda at length recovered her spirits, more through the exquisite sensation of her grief, than through the water which Siffredi sprinkled on her face; and perceiving, while she opened her languishing eyes, how eagerly busy he was in assiting her, "Sir, (said she, with a feeble voice) I am ashamed that you have seen my weakness; but death, which must soon end my torments, will, in a little time rid you of an unhappy daughter, who has dared to dispose of her heart without your consent." "No, my dear Sigismunda, (replied Leontio) live, and let virtue resume its empire in your breast. The constable's passion does you honour; he is the most considerable match in the kingdom." -- "I esteem his person and his merit, (said Sigismunda, interrupting him) but, Sir, the king had made me hope" --- "Daughter, (said Siffredi, cutting her short in his turn) I know all that you can say on that subject. I am not ignorant of your tenderness for the prince, which, at another conjuncture, I should not disapprove. You should even see me eager to insure you of the hand of Tancred, if the interest of his glory, and that of the state, did not oblige him to bestow it on Constance. It is on that condition only, that the late king designed him for his successor; and would you have him prefer you to the crown of Sicily? Believe me, I sympathize with you in the cruel stroke you suffer: but since we cannot withstand the decrees of destiny,

destiny, make one generous effort. Your glory is concerned in concealing from the kingdom, the vain hope with which you flattered yourself. Your sensibility for the king, may raise reports to your disadvantage; and the only means of preventing them, will be to marry the constable. In short, Sigismunda, this is no time to deliberate. The king yields you for a throne, and marries Constance. The constable has my promise which I beg you will perform; and if I must use my authority to bring you to this resolution, I order you to comply."

So saying, he left her to reflect upon what she had heard, hoping, that after having maturely considered the arguments he had used, to support her virtue against her inclination, she would resolve, of herself, to give her hand to the constable. In this he was not mistaken. But what pangs did it cost the melancholy Sigismunda, before she came to that determination! she was in a condition which, of all others, was most worthy of compassion! Grief for seeing her presages of the infidelity of Tancred changed into certainty, and for being constrained in losing him, to give herself away to another, whom she could not love, created in her such violent transports of affliction, that every moment was attended with new torture. If my misfortune is certain (cried she) how can I resist it without dying? cruel destiny! why was I fed with the most delicious hope, when I was doomed to such an abyss of misery! and thou perfidious lover! how durst thou betroth thyself to another, after thou hadst promised eternal fidelity to me? hast thou so soon forgot the faith thou hadst sworn? As a punishment for having so cruelly deceived me, may heaven make the nuptial bed, which thou art going to stain with perjury, not a scene of pleasure, but remorse! may the caresses of Constance convey poison to thy unfaithful heart! and may thy marriage be as baleful as mine! Yes, traitor! I will espouse the constable, whom I cannot love,

love, to revenge me on myself, and punish me, for having so indiscreetly chosen the object of my love. Since my religion forbids me to make an attempt upon my life, the days I have to live shall be nothing else than an unhappy series of troubles and disquiet. If thou still preservest any tenderness for me, thou wilt be mortified at seeing me throw myself into the arms of another; and if thou hast intirely forgot me, Sicily, at least may boast of having produced a woman, who punished herself, for having too simply disposed of her heart.

In such a situation did this unhappy victim of love and duty pass the night that preceeded her marriage with the constable; and Siffredi finding her next day ready to comply with his desire, made haste to take the advantage of that favourable disposition. He sent for the constable to Belmont that same day, and married him privately to his daughter, in the chapel of the castle. It was not enough to renounce a crown, to lose, for ever a person whom she loved, and bestow herself upon the object of her hatred, but she was also obliged to dissemble her sentiments before a husband, who was inflamed with the most ardent passion for her, and naturally of a jealous disposition. That spouse, charmed with the possession of what he held most dear, was continually in her company, and did not even allow the sad consolation of bewailing her misfortune in secret. When night approached the daughter of Leontio felt her affliction redouble: but what were her pangs, when her woman, after having undressed, left her alone with the constable! He asked, in a respectful manner, the cause of that sorrow, with which she seemed so depressed; and Sigismunda, perplexed by the question, feigned herself indisposed. This deceived her husband at first, but he did not long continue in his mistake: for, as he was really concerned at the condition in which he saw her, and pressed her to go to bed, his entreaties, which she misinterpreted, presented such a cruel image to her imagination, that, being unable to

to contain herself any longer, she gave free vent to her sighs and tears. What a sight was this, for a man who believed himself at the the very summit of his happiness! He no longer doubted that the affliction of his wife portended something sinister to his love. Nevertheless, though the knowledge of it threw him into a situation almost as deplorable as that of Sigismunda, he had the command of himself, that he concealed his suspicions. He redoubled his entreaties, and continued to press his spouse to go to rest, assuring her, that he would not interrupt the repose which she seemed so much to want. He even offered to call her women, if she thought that their assistance could alleviate her indisposition. Sigismunda, encouraged by this promise, told him, that her present weakness only required a little sleep. He pretended to believe her, and going to bed together, they passed a night very different from those which Cupid and Hymen bestow on two lovers inspired by mutual passion.

While Siffredi's daughter indulged her sorrow, the constable endeavoured, within himself, to divine the cause that rendered his marriage so unhappy. He concluded that there was a rival in the case; but was bewildered in his own imagination, when he attempted to discover who that rival was; and the sole result of his conjectures was, that he was the most unhappy of all mankind. He had already spent two thirds of the night in these agitations, when his ears were struck with a hollow noise; and he was not a little surprized to hear somebody walking softly in the chamber. He believed himself mistaken; for he remembered that he himself had locked the door, after Sigismunda's women were gone, and drew back the curtain to discover, by the evidence of his eyes; the cause of the noise which he heard: but the light, which had been left in the chimney, was extinguished, and, in a little

tle time, he heard the name of Sigismunda repeated several times, in a soft and languishing tone. Then his jealous suspicions inflamed to fury, and his honour alarmed, obliging him to rise, in order to prevent an affront, or take vengeance for it, he seized his sword, and moved towards that side whence the voice seemed to come. Feeling a naked sword opposed to his own, he advanced, the other retired, he pursued, and the other vanished from his pursuit. In vain did he search for him, who seemed to fly, through all the corners of the room, as much as the darkness would allow; he could not find him; he stopt, listened and heard nothing. All seemed to be enchantment! he went to the door, which he imagined had favoured the flight of the secret enemy of his honour, but he found it fast locked as before. Not being able to comprehend any thing of this adventure, he called those of his people, who were nearest, and as he opened the door for that purpose, placed himself in the passage, and kept himself on his guard, that the person whom he sought might not escape.

Some servants hearing his repeated cries, came running with lights; upon which he took a candle, and made a new search in the chamber, with his sword in hand; but he found no body, nor the least mark of any body's being there. He did not even perceive the private door, nor the opening through which there was a passage. He could not, however, blindfold himself, with regard to the circumstances of his misfortune, but remained in a strange confusion of thoughts. Should he have recourse to Sigismunda, she was too much concerned in the truth, for him to expect an explanation from her. He therefore resolved to go and open his heart to Leontio, after having dismissed his servants, telling them, that he thought he had heard a noise in his chamber, but was mistaken. He met his father-in-law coming out of his apartment,

ment, at the disturbance he had heard, and recounted to him what had happened, with all the marks of extreme agitation and profound grief.

Siffredi was surprized at the adventure, which, tho' it did not seem natural, he, nevertheless, believed; and thinking that the king's love was capable of anything, was very much afflicted with that consideration. But, far from flattering the jealous suspicions of his son-in-law, he represented to him, with an air of assurance, that the voice, which he thought he heard, and the sword that was opposed to his, could be no other than phantoms of imagination misled by jealousy; for, it was impossible that any body could have gone into his daughter's chamber; that with regard to the melancholy which he had observed in his wife, it might be occasioned by some indisposition; that honour ought not to be answerable for the vicissitudes of temper; that the change of condition in a girl used to live in solitude, who fees herself on a sudden delivered to a man, whom she has not had time to know and to love, might be the cause of those tears, sighs, and that sharp affliction, of which he complained; that love was not to be kindled in maidens of a noble birth, by any other means, than time and assiduity; for which reasons, he exhorted him to calm his disquiet, redouble his tenderness and care, in order to dispose Sigismunda to become more sensible of his merit, and intreated him to return to his chamber, being persuaded that his uneasiness and distrust were injuries done to the virtue of his wife.

The constable made no answer to the remonstrances of his father-in-law; whether he really began to think that he might have been imposed upon by the disorder of his mind, or judged it a wiser course to dissemble than to undertake, in vain, to convince the old man of an event so void of all probability—he returned to his apartment, lay down by his wife, and

tried to obtain, by sleep, some respite from his disquiet. Sigismunda, on her side, was not less uneasy than he: she had but too well heard that which had alarmed her husband, and could not consider as an illusion an adventure, the secret and motives of which she knew.—Surprized that Tancred should seek to introduce himself into her apartment, after having so solemnly pledged his faith to Constance, instead of approving or feeling the least glimpse of joy at this step, she looked upon it as a new outrage, and her heart was incensed against him.

While the daughter of Siffredi, prejudiced against the young king, believed him the most unfaithful of men, that unhappy prince, more in love than ever, wished for an interview with Sigismunda, in order to encourage her against the appearances that condemned him. He would have come sooner to Belmont for that purpose, had he been permitted by the multiplicity of business in which he was necessarily engaged; but he could not steal away from court before that night. He was too well acquainted with all the private corners of a place in which he had been educated, to be under any difficulty of getting unseen into Siffredi's castle; and he still kept the key of a private door that belonged to the garden; through this he got into his own apartment, from whence he passed into the chamber of Sigismunda.—You may imagine the astonishment of that prince when he found a man there, and felt a sword opposed to his own. He had well nigh discovered himself, and punished on the spot the audacious wretch, who durst lift his sacrilegious hand against his lawful king; but the respect he owed to Leontio's daughter, suspended his resentment. He retired in the same manner as he had entered, and, more afflicted than ever, took the road to Palermo; where arriving some moments before day, he shut himself up in his apartment. But the agitation of his spirits

spirits depriving him of rest, he resolved to return to Belmont; his safety, honour, and, above all, his love, not permitting him to remain longer ignorant of the least circumstance of such a cruel adventure.

It was no sooner day than he commanded his hunting-equipage to be got ready, and, under pretence of taking that diversion, rode far into the forest of Belmont, attended by his sportsmen and some courtiers. He followed the chase some time, the better to conceal his design; and when he saw every one eagerly engaged at the heels of the hounds, he separated himself from them, and, all alone, took his way to Leontio's castle. He was too well acquainted with the paths of the forest to lose himself, and his impatience not permitting him to spare his horse, he in a little time over-run the distance that separated him from the object of his love. He was just inventing some plausible pretext to procure for himself a private interview with the daughter of Siffredi, when, crossing a small road that led to one of the park gates, he perceived, hard-by, two women, sitting in close conversation at the root of a tree. As he did not doubt that these persons belonged to the castle, the sight of them raised within him some emotion: but he was much more transported, when, the women turning towards him at the noise of his horse's feet, he knew one of them to be his dear Sigismunda, who had escaped from the castle with Nisa, one of her women, who enjoyed the greatest share of her confidence, to bewail her misfortune at full liberty.

He flew—he threw himself headlong (if I may use the expression) at her feet; and perceiving in her eyes all the marks of the most profound affliction, was melted at the sight. “ Fair Sigismunda (said he) suspend the emotions of your grief: appearances, I confess, represent me guilty to your eyes; but when you are made acquainted with the design which I have

formed in your behalf, that which you now look upon as a crime, will appear to you a proof of my innocence and excess of love." These words, which Tancred thought capable of moderating, served only to redouble the affliction of Sigismunda, who would have answered him, had not her voice been choaked up with her sighs. The prince, astonished at her disorder, said, " How, madam, can't I, then, calm your disquiet? By what misfortune have I lost your confidence? I, who hazard my crown, and even my life, to keep myself yours!" --- 'Twas then that the daughter of Siffredi, making an effort to explain herself, replied, " Sir, your promises are now unreasonable.--Nothing henceforth can bind my destiny to yours." " Ah, Sigismunda! (said Tancred, interrupting her with warmth) what cruel words are these I hear! Who dares ravish you from my love? Who dares oppose the fury of a king, who would put all Sicily in flames, rather than suffer you to be torn from his hopes" --- " All your power, Sir, (answered Siffredi's daughter, in a languishing manner) cannot remove the obstacles by which we are separated.-- I am the constable's wife" -- "The constable's wife!" (cried the prince, staggering backwards, and unable to go on.) He was confounded and overwhelmed by this unexpected blow: his strength forsook him, and he dropt down at the root of a tree that grew behind him.--Pale, trembling, and depress'd, he had nothing free but his eyes, which he fixed upon Sigismunda, in such a manner as gave her to understand how deeply affected he was with the unhappy tidings she had declared. She, on the other hand, looked upon him with an air which convinced him, that her emotions were little different from those he felt; and these two unfortunate lovers preserved, between them, a silence that had something terrible in it. At length the prince, recollecting himself a little, by an effort of his courage, resumed the discourse, and

and said to Sigismunda with a sigh, " What have you done, madam? Your credulity has ruined me, and undone yourself."

Sigismunda, piqued at the prince's seeming to upbraid her, when she thought she had much more cause to complain of him, replied, " What, Sir! do you add dissimulation to infidelity? Would you have me discredit my own eyes and ears, and believe you innocent, in spite of the evidence of my senses? No, Sir, I own myself incapable of such an effort of reason."

---" Nevertheless, madam, (answered the king) you are imposed upon by these very witnesses which seem so faithful: even they have assisted in betraying you; and that I am innocent and faithful, is no less true than that you are the constable's wife." " How, Sir! (said she) did not I hear you confirm to Constance the present of your hand and heart? Have you not assured the nobles of the kingdom, that you would fulfil the conditions of the late king's will; and has not the princefs received the homage of your new subjects, in quality of queen and spouse of Tancred? Were my eyes then bewitched? Say, say rather, unfaithful prince! that you did not think Sigismunda ought to ballance in your heart the interest of a throne; and, without studying to feign a passion that you no longer feel, and perhaps never felt, confess that the crown of Sicily appeared to you more fixed with Constance than with Leontio's daughter.--- You are in the right, Sir: a shining throne was no more my due than the heart of a prince, such as you are. I was too vain to pretend to either; but you ought not to have indulged me in my error.-- You know the alarms I felt on account of losing you; a misfortune that then seemed to me almost inevitable. Why did you encourage me with hope? Would to heaven my fears had not been dissipated! I should have accused fortune, not you; and you would have, at least, preserved my heart tho'

tho' at the expence of a hand which no other should ever have obtained. It is now no time to justify yourself: I am the constable's wife; and that I may spare myself the consequence of a conversation, that makes my glory blush, give me leave, Sir, without failing in that respect which I owe you, to quit the presence of a prince, whom I am no longer at liberty to hear."

So saying, she left Tancred with as much haste as her present weak condition would allow. "Stop, madam! (cried he) and do not drive to despair a prince, who will rather overturn that throne, which you upbraid him with having prefer'd to you, than fulfil the expectation of his new subjects." "That sacrifice (said Sigismunda) is at present vain. While I am married to the constable, these generous transports will not avail: since I am then no longer at liberty, it is of small importance to me that you reduce Sicily to ashes, or to whom you give your hand. If I have been weak enough to let my heart be surprized, I shall at least have fortitude enough to stifle its emotions; and let the new king of Sicily see, that the constable's wife is no longer the lover of prince Tancred." When she pronounced these words, being close to the park-gate, she entered it of a sudden with Nila; and, locking it on the other side, left the prince overwhelmed with sorrow. He could not recover the blow which Sigismunda had given him, by the account of her marriage, "Unjust Sigismunda! (cried he) you have lost all remembrance of our mutual engagement! In spite of our reciprocal vows, we are for ever parted; and the idea which I had cherished of possessing your charms, was no more than a vain illusion. Ah, cruel maid! how dearly did I buy your approbation of my flame!"

Then the image of his rival's happiness presented itself to his fancy, with all the horrors of jealousy; which took such full possession of his soul for some moments, that he was on the point of sacrificing the constable,

constable, and even Siffredi himself, to his resentment. -- Reason however, by degrees, allayed the violence of his transports : but the impossibility he perceived of banishing from Sigismunda the impressions she retained of his infidelity, threw him again into despair. -- He flattered himself with the hopes of effacing them, provided he could converse with her at liberty ; for which purpose, judging it necessary to remove the constable, he resolved to have him apprehended, as a person suspected of designs against the state. He accordingly charged with this office the captain of his guards, who, repairing to Belmont, secured his person in the twilight, and brought him prisoner to the castle of Palermo.

This incident filled all Belmont with consternation. Siffredi set out immediately to offer himself to the king as security for his son-in-law, and to represent the troublesome consequences of such an arrest. The prince, who expected this step of his minister, and who was resolved, at all events, to obtain a free interview with Sigismunda, before the constable should be releas'd, had expressly ordered that no person whatever should speak with him till next day. But Leontio, notwithstanding this order, finding means to get access to the king's chamber, presented himself before him, saying, "Sir if a loyal and respectful subject may be allowed to complain of his master, I am come to complain of you to yourself. -- What crime has my son-in-law committed ? Has your majesty reflected on the eternal reproach you have fixed upon my family ; and on the consequences of an imprisonment, which may alienate from your service the hearts of those who fill the most important posts of the realm ?" "I have certain intelligence, (replied the king) that the constable carries on a criminal correspondence with the infant Don Pedro." "Criminal correspondence ! (cried Leontio, with surprize) do not believe it. -- Your majesty is imposed upon ; treason

son never entered the family of Siffredi ; and the constable's being my son-in-law, is enough to screen him from all suspicion.---The constable is innocent ; but other secret views have induced you to arrest him."

" Since you talk to me so freely (replied the king) I will speak to you in the same manner.--- You complain of the constable's being imprisoned : what ! have I not more cause to complain of your cruelty ? It is you, barbarous Siffredi ! who have robbed me of my quiet, and reduced me, by your officious care, to a condition that makes me envy the lowest of mankind. But don't flatter yourself that I will enter into your schemes :---my marriage with Constance is resolved upon in vain."--How, Sir (cried Leontio, trembling) can you refuse to marry the princess, after having flattered her with that hope before all your people?"

" If I deceive their expectation (replied the king) ascribe it solely to yourself. Why did you lay me under a necessity of promising that which I could not perform ? Who compelled you to fill a paper, which I gave your daughter, with the name of Constance ? You was not ignorant of my intention.--- You tyrannized over the heart of Sigismunda, in making her marry a man she did not love. But what right had you to dispose of mine, in favour of a princess whom I hate ?--Have you forgot that she is the daughter of that cruel Mathilda, who, trampling under her feet all the ties of blood and humanity, made my father breath his last, under all the rigours of captivity ? And shall I espouse her ? No, Siffredi ! lay aside that hope.---Before you see the torch of these direful nuptials lighted, you will see all Sicily in flames, and its ashes quenched in blood!"

" What do I hear ! (cried Leontio) Ah, Sir ! what a prospect have you shewn me ? What terrible threats !--But I am unseasonably alarmed, (added he, in another tone) you love your subjects too well, to entail

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upon them such misery. You will not tarnish your virtues with the weaknesses of ordinary men. If I have bestowed my daughter on the constable, it was done, Sir, with a view of acquiring for your majesty a valiant subject, who can support with his arm, and the troops which are at his disposal, your interest against that of the prince Don Pedro. I thought that in attaching him to my family, by such intimating ties---" "Ha! these are the ties, (cried the prince Tancred) these are the fatal ties that have undone me! Cruel friend! why did you inflict such a heavy stroke upon me? Did I order you to manage my concerns at the expence of my heart? Why did you not leave me to support my rights by myself? Did I want courage to reduce those who should rebel against me? I should have known how to punish the constable, had he disobeyed me. I know that kings ought not to be tyrants, and that the happiness of their people should be their chief aim; but must they therefore be the slaves of their subjects, and, from the moment that heaven chuses them to govern, lose the right that nature grants to all men, of disposing their affections as they please? Ah! if they must not enjoy the privilege of the lowest class of mortals, take back, Siffredi, that sovereign power which you would confirm at the expence of my repose."

"You know very well, Sir, (replied the minister) that your marriage with the princess was, by the late king, made the condition of your succession to the crown." --- "And what right (answered Tancred) had he to establish that disposition? Had he received such an unworthy law, when he succeeded to his brother king Charles? And how came you to be so weak as to submit to the unjust condition? For an high chancellor, methinks, you are very ill informed of our customs, In a word tho' I have promised my hand to Constance, it was not a voluntary engagement, therefore I do not

intend to keep my word ; and if Don Pedro, from my refusal, conceives the hope of mounting my throne without engaging the people in a quarrel, which might cost too much blood, let the sword decide, in single combat, which of us is most worthy to reign." Leontio, not daring to urge him any farther, contented himself with asking, on his knees, the enlargement of his son-in-law, which he obtained.—"Go, (said the king to him) return to Belmont, whither the constable will soon follow you." The minister went away, and got back to Belmont, persuaded that his son-in-law would not be long behind. But in this he was mistaken : Tancred resolved to see Sigismunda that night, and therefore deferr'd the release of her husband till next day.

Mean while the constable was tortured with the most cruel reflections : his imprisonment had open'd his eyes with regard to the true cause of his misfortune : he therefore abandoned himself to his jealousy ; and renouncing the allegiance he had hitherto so commendably preserved, breathed nothing but vengeance. As he concluded that the king would not fail of being with Sigismunda that night, in order to surprize them together, he begged the governor of the castle of Palermo to let him go out, assuring him that he would return to prison next morning before day. The governor, who was intirely devoted to him, consented to this the more easily, as he knew that Siffredi had already obtained his liberty, and even furnished him with a horse to carry him to Belmont ; where the constable being arrived, he tied his horse to a tree, entered the park by a little door, of which he had the key, and was so lucky as to get into the castle unperceived. He went straight to the apartment of his wife, and concealing himself in an anti-chamber behind a screen, which he found there, proposed to observe from thence all that should pass, and to appear suddenly in Sigismunda's

munda's chamber, at the least noise he should hear.-- While he was in this situation, he saw Nisa come out from her mistress, and retire to the closet where she lay.

Siffredi's daughter, who had easily discerned the motive of her husband's imprisonment, concluded that he would not return that night to Belmont, altho' her father had told her, that the king assured him the constable would set out soon after him. She did not doubt that Tancred would take the advantage of that conjuncture to visit and converse with her at liberty; and in this opinion she waited for the prince, in order to reproach him with an action which might have terrible consequences, in regard to her.---Accordingly, in a little time after Nisa had withdrawn, the partition opened, and the king came and threw himself at Sigismunda's feet, saying, "Madam, do not condemn before you have given me the hearing: if I have ordered the constable to be imprisoned, consider that it was the only means I had left to justify myself; therefore impute that artifice to yourself alone. Why did you, this morning, refuse to hear me? Alas! to-morrow your husband will be enlarged, and I shall never have an opportunity of speaking to you again. Hear me, then, for this last time:--if the loss of you makes me the most forlorn of all mankind, at least grant me the melancholy consolation of convincing you that my infidelity is not the cause of my misfortune; for tho' I confirmed to Constance the offer of my hand, it was what I could not dispence with doing, in the situation to which your father had reduced me.--There was a necessity for my deceiving the princess, for your interest as well as my own, in order to secure to you the crown as well as the person of your lover. This I flattered my self with accomplishing, and had already taken measures to break the fatal engagement; but you have destroyed my plan, and, by giving yourself a

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way too inconsiderately, laid up a fund of eternal sorrow for two hearts, which might have been rendered happy by the most inviolable love ! ”

He ended this complaint with such visible marks of real despair, that Sigismunda was touched with his condition, and no longer doubted his innocence, which at first gave her some joy ; but afterwards, stung with the consideration of her misfortune, “ Ah, Sir ! (said she to the prince) after the cruel determination of our fate, you increase my affliction by letting me know that you were not guilty ! What have I done ; unfortunate that I am ! my resentment has betrayed me ! I thought myself abandoned, and in revenge accepted of the constable’s hand, which was presented by my father ! I am guilty of the crime, and have been the cause of our mutual mishap ! Alas ! while I accused you of having deceived me, it was I, too credulous lover ! it was I who broke those bounds which I had sworn to keep for ever inviolate ! Revenge yourself, Sir, in your turn.--Hate the ungrateful Sigismunda : forget her .” “ Ah, madam ! (said Tancred, interrupting her with a melancholy air) how shall I find means to tear from my heart a passion, which even your injustice cannot extinguish ! ” ---“ You must however, Sir, make that effort (replied Siffredi’s daughter, sighing.)” “ What ! are you capable of that effort yourself ? (said the king.)” “ I cannot promise to succeed, (answered she) but I will spare no pains in the endeavour.” “ Ah, cruel Sigismunda ! (said the prince) you will easily forget Tancred ! since you are able to form such a design ! ” “ And what can you expect (replied she, in a more resolute tone) Do you flatter yourself, that I will allow you to continue your addresses ? No, Sir, abandon that hope. Though I was not born to be a queen, heaven never formed me to listen to dishonourable love. My husband, as well as you, Sir, is descended from the noble house of Anjou ; and if my duty

duty did not oppose an insurmountable obstacle to your gallantry, my glory would hinder me from enduring it : I conjure you, therefore, to retire. We must see one another no more." Heavens ! what barbarity ! (replied the king) Ah, Sigismunda ! is it possible that you should treat me with such rigour ? You do not think then, that your being in the arms of the constable, is enough to overwhelm me ? you must also forbid me your sight, the only consolation I had left ! "Fly me, rather, (answered the daughter of Sifredi, shedding some tears) the sight of what one tenderly loves, ceases to be pleasing, when the hope of possessing it is lost. Adieu, Sir ! Fly from me. You owe that effort to your own glory and my reputation. I ask it also, for my quiet : for in short, although my virtue should not be alarmed by the emotions of my heart, the remembrance of your tenderness, will entail upon me such cruel conflicts, that I shall scarce have strength enough to maintain them."

She pronounced these words so passionately, that she unwittingly overturned a candlestick which stood on a table behind her ; and the candle going out in falling, she took it up in order to light it again for which purpose, she opened the door of the antichamber, and went to the closet of Nisa, who was not yet gone to bed. The king, who waited for her return no sooner saw her approach with the light, than he made pressing instances to her, that she would suffer his attachment. The constable hearing the prince's voice, rushed into the chamber sword in hand almost at the same time that his wife entered, and advancing towards Tancred with all the resentment that his rage inspired, "This is too much, tyrant ! (cried he) don't think that I am so base as to endure the affront thou hast done my honour" Traitor, (replied the king, putting himself in a posture of defence) don't imagine that thou art able to execute thy design with impunity.

impunity. With these words they began a combat which was too furious to last long : the constable fearing that Siffredi and his servants, alarmed at the cries of Sigismunda, would soon come and oppose his vengeance, fought without caution. His rage divested him of all judgment ; he took his measures so ill, that he ran upon his adversary's sword, which entered his body to the hilt, and the moment he fell, the king checked his indignation.

Leontio's daughter, touched with the condition in which she saw her husband, and surmounting the natural aversion she had for him, threw herself on the floor, and supported him with the most eager concern. But that unhappy spouse was too much prepossessed against her, to be affected with these expressions of her grief and compassion. Death, whose approaches he felt, could not suppress the transports of his jealousy ; he saw nothing in his last moments but the happiness of his rival, and that idea appeared so horrid, that recollecting all the strength he had left, he lifted the sword which was still in his hand, and plunged it in the breast of Sigismunda. “ (Die said he, while he stabbed her) die, unfaithful woman, since the ties of marriage have been too weak to preserve that faith which you swore to me at the altar ! And thou, Tancred (added he) boast not of thy fate. Thou canst not enjoy my misfortune, and therefore I die satisfied.” Having spoke thus, he expired, and his countenance, covered as it was with the shades of death, still retained something fierce and terrible. That of Sigismunda presented quite a different spectacle. The blow she received was mortal ; she fell upon the body of her dying spouse, and the blood of this innocent victim was mixed with that of her murderer, who had executed his cruel resolution so suddenly, that the king had not time to prevent its effects.

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That unfortunate prince seeing Sigismunda fall, uttered a loud cry, and, more confounded than she with the blow that had robbed her of life, hastened to give her the same succour that she had offered to the constable. But she said, with a faltering voice, “Sir, you may spare yourself the trouble. I am the victim which unpitying fate demands: may it appease the wrath of heaven, and secure the happiness of your reign.” As she pronounced these words, Leon-tio, brought thither by her cries, entered the chamber, and struck with the objects that presented themselves to his eyes, became motionless where he stood; while Sigismunda, without perceiving him, continuing to speak to the king, said, “Adieu, prince, che-
rish my memory. My love and misfortunes claim that favour. Entertain no resentment against my fa-
ther. Comfort his age and sorrow, and do justice to his zeal. Above all, make my innocence known. This is what I recommend to you more than any thing. Adieu, my dear Tancred.—I die—receive my last breath.”

So saying, she expired; and the king having kept a melancholy silence for some time, said to Siffredi, who seemed overwhelmed with woe, “Behold, Le-
ontio, contemplate your own work, and in this tragical event, consider the fruit of your officious care and zeal for me!” The old man was so penetrated with sorrow, that he made no reply—But why should I pretend to describe those things which no language can express? Let it suffice to say, that both uttered the most moving complaints, as soon as the greatness of their affliction allowed them the use of speech. The king all his life preserved the most tender re-
membrance of his mistress, and could never be pre-
vailed upon to marry Constance, who being joined by the infant Don Pedro, they spared nothing to a-
vail themselves of Roger’s will: but they were at last
obliged

obliged to yield to prince Tancred, who subdued all his enemies. As for Sifredi, the grief he felt, for having been the cause of so many misfortunes detached him from the world, and rendered his native country insupportable to him: he therefore abandoned Sicily, and crossing over into Spain, with Porcia, the only child he had left, purchased a castle where he lived near fifteen years after Sigismunda's death, and had the comfort before he died, of seeing Porcia settled.



